

The Ten That Were Taken – 1

Summary: This is the sequel to Harry Potter's first year, which was covered in 'The Roaring Snake'. This story will cover years 2 and 3. Both the years will somewhat follow the events of canon, although they not completely. Like the previous story, the tale will feature a smart, observant and resourceful Harry, with plenty of initiative, but not a mighty, or a super-rich one, or a political genius. Logical!leader!Harry is what I am aiming at, and like the prequel, will be heavily politically charged. But rest assured, the villains are as smart as Harry Potter, and every faction in the story will display at least a respectable degree of competence. The accent in this story is more on developing Harry and his friends from uncertain, irresolute boys and girls to toughened, determined creatures, wizards and witches aware of new found resources, and well worth having by one's side.

Dumbledore, Snape and Malfoy lovers – please note - none of the three will be pleasant. You have been warned!

Disclaimer: I don't own Harry Potter. I am merely playing in the world created by JKR. As usual, all criticism is welcome.

Summer Woes

The journey back from Hogwarts was uneventful and soon it was time for them all to alight at King's Cross station. Harry inwardly groaned at the thought of having to return to the Dursleys and bitterly resented the fact that the headmaster had condemned him to this hell. No matter what the headmaster averred, Harry was not comfortable going back to the Dursleys. He had asked if he could go visit his friends, but the headmaster had washed his hands off the matter saying that he had promised not to intervene in the Dursley household when he persuaded them to take Harry in and that he still felt bound by his promise. He counselled Harry to make his appeals to his uncle and aunt. As his magical guardian, Dumbledore even expressed approval for Harry's plan to get lessons over summer from the Rosiers and the Greengrasses.

Harry, however, knew better than to simply approach his relatives. The muggles would never consent to Harry learning more magic unless they either saw an advantage for themselves in Harry learning more or else, were terrified of forbidding Harry to learn it. Therefore, his hopes rested to a large extent on the plan Narcissa had devised.

The students all alighted and found themselves on the platform. Harry quickly spotted Priscilla, Berenice, and Andromache standing in a corner, chatting among themselves. They all greeted each other, and after a rather effusive welcome, Berenice and Andromache left with Sakarbal and Morag respectively, bidding Harry goodbye and wishing him a happy summer. After that, Harry, Priscilla and Daphne marched off to the muggle side of the platform, where Harry's loving relatives would be waiting.

Vernon Dursley, Petunia and Dudley were impossible to miss. Or rather, the former and the latter, given their inordinate size, were, although scrawny Petunia was almost eclipsed by the bulk of the two males. However, all three were glaring daggers at Harry for daring to bring a couple of freaks in tow. Both Priscilla and Daphne were still in wizarding robes, recking little of what others might think of them. Even less impressed were they by the death glares of the Dursleys. Priscilla ignored their hostility, and spoke, "Mr. Dursley, I am Priscilla Greengrass and my daughter Daphne is one of your nephew's classmates. I wanted to speak to you all and I think we had best go for a lunch .."

Vernon cut her off rudely, "Sorry, but we've got other business. Come, boy – we haven't got all day!"

Priscilla spoke coolly, "Mr. Dursley, your supervisor would be most displeased if you were to skip this meeting with myself and a friend of mine, who I believe has visited you a few months ago. I think we will waive your objections." She stared icily at Vernon, daring to contradict her, but Vernon's courage was the sort that wanes as the opposition waxes. He gulped, and Priscilla stifled her laughter with some effort. She nodded unemotionally, "Please follow me."

Giving the Dursleys no time to object, she casually turned and walked towards the exit, with Harry and Daphne in her wake. The three

Dursleys gazed with an admixture of horror, anger and hatred at the freak who had dared command them, but her shot about Vernon's supervisor had not escaped the gross man, dense as he was. Biting back a curse, Vernon gestured to Petunia and Dudley to follow him, and started off after Priscilla.

---(Scene Break)---

A short walk of a few minutes brought the entire group to a comfortable restaurant. Leaving Harry and Daphne, Lady Greengrass went to make arrangements for all of them, but Vernon, whose courage seemed to have revived somewhat in the meantime, remarked waspishly, "Don't the freaks have restaurants of their own?"

Before Harry could answer that comment, Daphne returned with the same icy coolness that her mother possessed in abundance, "Perhaps Mr. Dursley, my mum thought that you would be a little more civil if she treated you decently." She shrugged indifferently, before continuing, "It doesn't seem to be working."

Harry shot her a warning look, but she returned a reassuring glance, which seemed to say that things were under control. Or perhaps, it may have been principle for Daphne – though she was a rather pureblood, she did not take condescension from repellent muggles well.

Vernon was about to retort when Priscilla returned with Narcissa close at her heels. Vernon turned a nasty shade of green on seeing Narcissa. Narcissa had already shown her mettle once before, and Vernon did not care to fight a battle with the icily tranquil witch, who, though smooth as silk, was poisonous as a cobra and had the ruthlessness of the grave.

She greeted the muggles with perfunctory politeness, and began inquiring Harry about his needs for the summer, while food was brought to the table. Priscilla discreetly placed a silencing ward and a notice-me-not charm around their table. Harry told Narcissa and Priscilla that he had whatever he needed, but she cut him off. "Harry, tomorrow Mr. Tomlinson – your uncle's supervisor – will be interviewing you about your needs. Please feel free to tell him what

you require. I take it that Daphne has told you about the lessons that we are planning for gifted children?"

Harry nodded, and Narcissa continued, "We'll arrange transportation for you, Harry. You can leave your uncle's home ..."

At this point, Vernon cut in loudly, "I forbid it! The boy's not going anywhere in summer. And no freaks are coming near my home!"

Narcissa and Priscilla exchanged an exasperated glance. It appeared that Vernon Dursley was extremely stupid and didn't know whom to oppose and whom not to oppose. Narcissa returned, "Dursley, if Potter wants to attend lessons in summer, he'll do just that. You've no business stopping him from continuing his studies. He's one of the most gifted students in the year and you won't be getting in his way."

"Now look here, you people have got no business coming near my home to pick him up ..."

"Harry Potter's education is far more important than your inane prejudices!" snapped Narcissa, her eyes flashing with anger. "He'll be picked up in the morning and he'll return at nightfall ..."

"Over my dead body!" roared Vernon, rising to his feet, forgetting where he was. It had been very sensible of Priscilla to ensure their isolation, or else, every eye in the restaurant would already have been fixed on them.

Narcissa retorted contemptuously, "That can be arranged!" Both Priscilla and Narcissa had their wands drawn and pointed unwaveringly at Vernon Dursley, as he rose. Sparks hissed from Narcissa's wand and Petunia screamed, while Dudley fell off his chair with a resounding crash, one of the chair legs snapping off as his weight centred wrongly on the chair. Petunia screamed again, and jumped to help the fallen Dudley, while Priscilla repaired the chair with a casual flick of her wand. Vernon Dursley subsided into his chair under the menace of the two wands, but his fists were still clenched. Also, the power of Priscilla's demonstration – repairing the chair without any effort – was not lost on him. He loathed the two witches, but he also feared them.

Narcissa continued, "As I said, Harry, you'll need to come for the training."

"Where is it going to be, ma'am?"

"At my home," answered Priscilla. "There are strong wards around our property, so you'll be safe there. You can take the Knight Bus." Seeing Harry's lack of understanding, she explained, "It is a magical bus that appears whenever you need it. Just get out of your home into the street, stick your wand out and it will summon the bus. It can bring you just outside our wards."

"Are Hermione and Justin also coming that way?"

"No, Harry, their families are more accepting of magic than yours. They have the floo installed in their homes, and will be arriving by floo. We didn't think Mr. Dursley would agree to having the floo installed at your home."

Harry nodded, before questioning, "What'll we be studying, ma'am? And who's teaching?"

Priscilla answered, "All of you will have basic lessons in Astronomy, Charms, Potions, Transfiguration, Herbology and Defence. But some of you are showing promise in certain subjects. You, Harry, are very good at Transfiguration and Defence, so you'll receive extra lessons there. Also, you, Granger, and Finch-Fletchley will receive lessons on Magical culture and society. It should help you blend in better in our world, and expectations are sky high for you, anyway."

Priscilla took a sip of the coffee she had ordered before continuing, "I will be teaching Potions, my husband, Herbology, Berenice Rosier Charms, Hamalcar Rosier Astronomy, Andromache Wilkes Defence, and Regulus Black Transfiguration. Narcissa will be teaching Wizarding Culture."

Harry had one more question, "Who else is coming, ma'am?"

“Overall, we have chosen a dozen students. It is based on your scores in your first year as well as students who have special talents.” Seeing his expression, she almost smiled, “Don't worry, Harry, all your friends in your group are going to be in the classes. Also, we're going to have Theodore Nott, Draco Malfoy and a girl named Mandy Brocklehurst. She's a muggleborn, so she'll be sharing your

classes on Magical Culture.”

Harry was surprised, “I thought Padma Patil would be there – she was one of the better students around!”

Narcissa and Priscilla exchanged a significant glance, before Narcissa discreetly replied, “Let's just say that she's unlikely to attend any classes we conduct!”

They all enjoyed a good meal – or enjoyed it as much as they could with the Dursleys still glaring fearfully at them. Finally, the witches bade Harry goodbye and left, leaving him with the Dursleys. Without a word, Vernon walked back to his car, leaving Harry to run after the Dursleys, even as he struggled with his heavy trunk.

---(Scene Break)---

The Dursleys had allowed Harry to keep his stuff in his room, not daring to lock up everything in the cupboard under the stairs. The next day, Joseph Tomlinson arrived at Privet Drive and he and Harry had a long conversation on what his needs were, and the meeting ended with a shopping trip that got Harry new clothes for the first time. Tomlinson also promised Harry that he would call again next week, gave the boy his phone number and told the boy to call him should he need any more assistance. Vernon Dursley had lost face heavily with his supervisor and he did not relish the fact. Several times, Harry had seen Vernon gaze with an almost hungry expression at him, his fingers curling and uncurling as if he wished to wrap them around Harry's throat, but the fact that Harry was a wizard who might turn him into a toad if annoyed combined with the knowledge that Joe Tomlinson was monitoring the situation closely prevented Vernon Dursley progressing further than fantasies. Harry was alive to the changed situation and knew that, no matter the principle or what the

purebloods might feel about the muggles, he, Harry, still had to live with those selfsame muggles. Harry, therefore, was being quite cooperative and doing whatever was asked of him without any real fuss.

Harry still wrote his friends and they replied, and all in all, Harry was, for the first time in his life, having a decent summer.

The first week passed without further incident. It was on Sunday that Harry got a distressing bit of news from Narcissa via Rosier. It was late in the evening, when Harry's communication mirror warmed up and Harry picked it. Rosier was calling him from the other end. He spoke curtly, "Hello, Harry. Are you alone?"

Seeing Harry nod in acquiescence, he continued without preamble, "Auntie Cissa learnt some distressing news. Mr. Tomlinson – your uncle's supervisor – suffered from an automobile accident while travelling on factory work. He's dead. Auntie wanted to warn you – for the moment, there is no one supervising your uncle."

"Heavens!" muttered Harry, paling. His first reaction was one of sympathy for the bereaved family. But soon his thoughts returned to himself. His uncle had been looking more and more vengeful with each passing day. If he learnt that Tomlinson was out of the picture ...

Harry's fears had probably communicated themselves to Rosier, who sighed wearily. "I'm sorry, Harry, it seems that you are really unlucky. Auntie says she is working to see what she can do to fix the problem. In the meantime, you'll need to keep your head down."

Harry had recovered some of his composure by this time. He queried, "How did the accident occur?"

"All we know is that his car skidded off the road and hit a tree as he was driving last night. He was killed almost immediately, before emergency services could reach him."

Harry digested the news with a grim face. Finally, he asked, "If Tomlinson isn't around, I doubt my uncle will let me come to the lessons."

“Aunt Cissa is working on the problem. She'll try to find another hold over your uncle. But you'd best be prepared.”

Harry thanked Sakarbal, and quickly thought of his position. There was no doubt that he was in a precarious situation. While the most important hold over his uncle was gone, there still remained his own skill. And as far as the Dursleys knew, his skill was quite formidable. They did not know that he could not use his magic outside school. But that would only help him so far. His uncle knew that Harry would not push beyond a point, and it might even be dangerous for Harry if he did. Therefore, he decided to act soon. If he knew anything at all, his uncle would be back from work tomorrow, and he would confiscate all of Harry's magical paraphernalia.

Harry leaned back and considered his options. First, he could try to run away from the Dursleys. He had no doubt that his friends would happily host him. But there was the question of pride – he didn't want to be a burden to his friends, no matter how welcoming and well-intentioned they might be. Further, he was uncertain how much they could protect him, and Harry had learnt the hard way, since the earliest days, to rely only on himself. Finally, there was the question of legality. Harry was still under the guardianship of his uncle and Dumbledore. If they came up to the Rosiers, or the Greengrasses and demanded that Harry be handed over, would they be able to protect him? On balance, Harry was not sure. Running to Narcissa was much more feasible – the woman was eminently capable and she might be able to stand up to Dumbledore. But Harry did not get along with either Lucius Malfoy, or Draco, and he did not want to put himself in an obligation towards the Malfoys.

With a sigh, Harry wiped his brow and put away the mirror. Running away was always an option, but that was the last resort and there was no need yet to have recourse to such desperate means. There were, however, other measures he needed to adopt, before Uncle Vernon learnt of the fate of his supervisor.

---(Scene Break)---

Harry's predictions turned out to be very true. Uncle Vernon returned from work the next evening, glee stamped all over that face. A few vicious insults later, Harry was dragged back to his room and locked inside with a promise that he would not be allowed out at any time, except to do the chores. They fed him twice a day through a cat flap they installed on his door. All his magical equipment, along with the new clothing that Joseph Tomlinson had bought was seized and locked in the cupboard under the stairs. Dudley would often taunt him from outside the room – throwing him scraps of food as if he were a dog. Harry also got the unhappy 'privilege' of watching the Dursleys consume the food he cooked for them, while he himself got but crumbs of what was left over. Being locked up, and not willing to risk doing magic over the holidays, Harry could not even steal what he wanted.

After Rosier's warning, Harry had taken the precaution of hiding his wand and his communication mirror, along with his transfiguration book and some parchment and quill, under the loose floorboard in his room. He was very sure that the Dursleys would not check his stuff to make sure that he had indeed put all his magical stuff inside the cupboard. The Dursleys were too terrified of magic to actually sift through the wizarding equipment. As long as Harry did his work during the night, or when the Dursleys were otherwise engaged, his 'perfidy' was unlikely to be noticed.

Harry endured the situation for a few days, and finally informed Rosier of his situation, and the latter was horrified. Sakarbal knew that Harry's relatives disliked magic, but from there to actually locking up Harry in a room day in and day out was something unthinkable for him. He promised to talk to his parents and Narcissa and see if anything could be done. In the meantime, he counselled patience.

---(Scene Break)---

In the sitting room, Priscilla and Berenice were poring over their notes for the coming sessions. Sakarbal descended the stairs from his room, and addressed his mother, "Mum, there's a serious problem. Harry's relatives have locked him up in a room and are barely feeding him. He says there's no way he can come to the lessons."

The two witches were perplexed and Sakarbal explained Harry's situation. After they had overcome their horror, Berenice reflected, "We can't appeal to Dumbledore – he won't help Harry."

Sakarbal protested, "Mum, these muggles have locked up Harry ..."

"Makes no difference," returned Berenice coolly. "The old man probably knows of it already."

Priscilla murmured, "Why is Dumbledore doing this? What has he to gain by putting Harry with those ogres?"

"I don't know – that is a question Cissy can answer better, I guess," sighed Berenice. They all sat in silence for a minute and then Berenice spoke up decisively, "Tell him to break out. Tell him to open his prison, walk out of the house and take the Knight Bus here. His first spellcasting will only get a warning from the Ministry. Nothing serious. Tell him to leave the place and come here. We can hide him, even from Dumbledore."

Rosier promptly transmitted his mother's advice to Harry, who promised to put the plan in action the next morning. Harry could have left that very night, but he ardently wished to wave goodbye to his dear relatives.

---(Scene Break)---

The next morning, as Petunia stamped up the stairs, screeching at the freak to get up and do the chores, Harry casually flicked his wand at the locked door, and it sprang open. He marched out with the wand outstretched. Petunia shrieked loudly seeing Harry toward her. Harry murmured, his voice dripping sarcasm, "Thank you, aunt Petunia, for your loving care. It is time for me to leave here. Let's hope we shan't meet again!"

Her shouts had brought Vernon to the stairs and seeing Harry striding toward him, he bellowed like a hippopotamus and raised his fist, but Harry pointed his wand at his uncle, "Stand back!"

"Where d'you think you're going, freak!"

"Away from here!" returned Harry curtly. As he moved towards the cupboard under the stairs, Vernon moved to shield the cupboard with his bulk. "Out of my way, uncle! I will not ask you twice!"

Vernon Dursley's face as an interesting shade – a curious mixture of red, white and green. His hatred was vying with his fear, and Harry decided to help the latter – sending a jet of sparks from his wand at his dear uncle. Vernon stumbled back and Harry jabbed his wand at the cupboard, muttering "Alohomora!". The door sprang open and Harry began grabbing his things. A few minutes later, he had retrieved all his equipment, and lifting his trunk in his left hand, he strode out the door. 'Everything is going to be fine', thought Harry, as he walked towards the gate. A few yards from the gate, a sudden weakness assaulted him, and almost caused him to collapse. He staggered and sat down on the grass, his trunk dropping from his suddenly limp hands. He could barely comprehend what was going on round him, let alone stand. He was still trying to recover from his grogginess, when a huge fist smashed into the back of his head, and he knew no more.

---(Scene Break)---

Half an hour later, Harry was back in his room, lying on his bed. Uncle Vernon was glaring at him, an expression of loathing and gloating on his puce face. He whispered savagely to Harry, "A letter arrived about you, freak! From your government! Seems you're not allowed to use magic over summer! Forgot to tell us about that, didn't you?"

He growled and grabbed the front of Harry's shirt, pulling the boy to his feet and the latter gulped. "I've news for you, boy! You're not going anywhere from now on! You'll stay locked here and if you magic yourself out, they'll expel you from your freak school!"

He flung Harry to the floor contemptuously, and strode out, locking the door behind him. Harry glanced around and saw that his wand, his mirror and all other magical items were gone, along with Hedwig. He prayed fervently that his owl had not been killed.

Harry sighed – he was in deeper trouble than ever. He didn't understand what had happened and why he had nearly fainted when he had tried to escape from Privet Drive. His attempt to flee had backfired, Vernon knew the true state of affairs now, and to top it all, now his wand and mirror were gone, and he had no way to contact his friends. Things could scarcely get worse.

---(Author's Notes)---

Do try to guess where the title comes from. It is based on the works of an author who writes very gritty and realistic fantasy fiction. One hint: Dominator and the Lady. I will give out the answer where the story title comes from in my next chapter.

In this chapter, Narcissa and Priscilla were more than a bit supercilious towards the Dursleys. For all that Priscilla is not too bigoted, even she really doesn't like muggles and even less, close minded muggles at that. This will have some repercussions in later chapters.

Try to guess what happened to Harry Potter and why he was unable to leave Privet Drive. I have always disliked stories where Harry can simply walk/run/fly away or portkey/apparate from Privet Drive without Dumbledore being aware of it or able to prevent it. You can think of the old man as 'good' manipulator or an 'evil' one, but there is no doubt that he is an extraordinarily competent manipulator. In one of my previous stories, I used a different trick for Harry to get away. Here, I will be introducing a different escape for Harry. Nevertheless, there will be no easy escapes for Harry Potter from Durskaban.

The Ten That were Taken – 2

A Prisoner's Predicament

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The young Rosier scion and the Greengrass heiress waited in vain for Harry Potter to turn up on their doorstep. There was no sign of the Boy-Who-Lived, and with each passing moment, Sakarbal and Daphne were getting more and more agitated. They checked the clocks twice a minute, fidgeted in their chairs and gave every other sign of nervous impatience. By lunchtime, Harry had still not put in an appearance, and Rosier warmed up the mirror, trying to contact Harry. "Harry, are you there? Are you alright? Damn it, Harry, answer me!"

There was no answer and half a dozen fruitless efforts later, Rosier gave up and faced Daphne, "He's either not answering or not in a position to answer."

Daphne returned, "Don't see any reason why he wouldn't answer us if he could."

Rosier nodded worriedly, "I can't think of any cause either."

He didn't need to voice the implication that Harry's inability to answer was ominous and that it did not augur well for their plan. They had chosen to get Harry to attempt to break out, and something had gone really wrong. They could only wait now.

By late afternoon came information from a different source – Susan Bones. She flooed the two purebloods, "Sak, Daph – I need to tell you something."

"Sure, Sue," answered Rosier. "Come over, will you?"

A minute later, the pink faced former Hufflepuff stumbled out the floo at the Rosier mansion. She straightened out and spoke, "Harry's got an official warning from the Ministry. He used magic today morning. I've sent Harry a letter asking him what's going on, but there's no

reply yet. I checked with Justin, Millie, and Hermione, and they know nothing either. D'you know what's going on?"

Sakarbal and Daphne exchanged a quick glance, and quickly filled in the girl about Harry's predicament and the plan they had suggested to Harry. But Harry's disappearance since then had them worried about the Boy-Who-Lived. They could not account for the delay. Susan nodded, excused herself for a few minutes, and then returned to the Rosier mansion. She collapsed in a chair, as Rosier asked, "Sue – what time did Harry get the warning?"

"About seven in the morning."

Rosier nodded, "Let's try to arrange what we know, so when we get any new information, we'll be able to fit the pieces into their places."

The two witches nodded, and Sakarbal continued, "Harry said he'd break out today morning. Did he make the attempt?"

Susan murmured, "Since he got the warning at seven today morning, and he had himself said he would be performing magic to escape his prison, it's likely the magic he performed was to escape the Dursleys."

Daphne nodded in agreement, and Sakarbal continued, "So, he was actually able to attempt. What magic did he perform, Sue?"

"A couple of unlocking charms, a very weak sparkler spell and a feather light charm, in that order."

"Good," nodded Sakarbal. "The unlocking charms indicate that he got out of the prison – or at least, partly out of the gaol, since we have no way of knowing how many doors needed to be opened. Then we come to the sparkler spell – what does that indicate to you?"

Daphne muttered, "Was he trying to signal someone? That he was in trouble?"

Susan countered it, "There's no witch or wizard around where Harry lives. He's got no muggle friends that we know of. Besides, the

sparkler spell he used was very weak. It would just send sparks a few feet. If you wanted to signal someone, you would use a stronger spell. From the strength of the spell he used, I'd say it was just a show spell. Very likely he wanted to impress – or intimidate – someone.”

Rosier and Greengrass were both impressed with Susan's theory. They nodded, and Susan continued, “My guess is that he came across his jailors while escaping. He used the spell to intimidate them. It also agrees with what happened next – the feather light charm. He probably used it on his stuff to make it easy to carry.”

“If he got his stuff out, where is he? And why is he not answering?” The question had come from Rosier.

“Chere ami, there is no proof that he did manage to escape,” returned Susan Bones quietly. “All we know is that he was preparing to escape.”

“But what could have happened after he got his things out?” questioned Daphne.

“I don't know. But we can only guess that something went wrong between his preparing to leave and actually leaving the Dursleys. I just talked to the Knight Bus driver. He has not been in Surrey at all today. From these two facts, I think it is safe to infer that Harry never made it out of his prison. Moreover, if he tried to escape and failed, it would account for his not being able to talk to us.”

Rosier and Greengrass exchanged a tight-lipped glance. “So what do we do now?” queried Daphne.

Susan returned thoughtfully, “First things first. Let's each send Harry an owl to see if he's alright. Let's also try to find out what we know about Harry's situation. Then we can formulate our own plans.”

---(Scene Break)---

Madam Bones had been filled in on the information by Susan, and having heard of Harry's predicament, she sighed, “Sue, I know he's your friend, but there's no reason to worry ...”

"No reason to worry!" echoed Susan in surprise. "He's tried to escape and he's gone missing and you think there's no reason to worry!"

"Don't take that tone with me, Sue!" admonished Amelia sharply. Seeing her niece deflate visibly, she softened, "Let's wait for a day or two. Maybe he's got his own reasons for not responding ..."

Susan had recovered her courage under a flash of temper. She countered, "Auntie, you know that's not true. He was told by the Rosiers to break out and he agreed to do just that. You know the spells he cast were ones that would help him do just that. And suddenly, after preparing to leave, he goes missing. It can mean only one thing – something's happened to him."

"You don't know that Sue. He might just not be communicating. He could have changed his plans."

"If he changed his plans, he would inform us, first thing," retorted Susan. "I know Harry, Auntie. He's not the kind to simply vanish without any messages to us. Something's wrong with him, I'm sure."

In spite of herself, Amelia was impressed with her niece's reasoning. However, she shook her head to her niece, "Let's wait and see, Susan. There could be any number of reasons for his disappearance."

But Susan pleaded, "You could just check on the Dursleys, auntie. Just make sure he's alright. You could demand to see him and make sure he's alright."

Amelia sighed, "I'm afraid I can't, Sue. I can't even go to the Dursleys' home without the permission of Dumbledore."

"What do you mean you can't go?" demanded Susan.

"Dumbledore invoked some protection that prevents any witch or wizard from going to the Dursley household. The only way would be to reach Harry Potter is with the permission of Dumbledore. And I don't see Dumbledore allowing me to visit Harry Potter."

Susan was horrified at what she was hearing. "So if those muggles were to murder Harry ..."

Amelia snorted, cutting off her niece. "Don't be melodramatic! They wouldn't do anything of the sort!"

Susan was not to be put off so easily. She persisted, "But supposing for argument's sake, those muggles were to hurt Harry, you'd still not investigate it?"

Amelia looked sharply at Susan, wondering how much Harry Potter had influenced her to command this amount of solicitude from her niece. It also shook her a bit – Harry Potter seemed to have the loyalty of his friends to a huge extent. This was not something to be taken lightly. However, she answered succinctly, "Without the authorisation of the Minister, or permission from Dumbledore, I simply cannot intervene, without breaking the law. But I'm sure those muggles would not harm Harry. Goodnight, Sue. Get to bed now!" With that, the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement left the room, leaving Susan with the growing conviction that her aunt would not do much to help her. Within the parameters of the law, she might help – as long as it did not conflict her own interests. However, Harry Potter's safety or well-being did not rate highly in the priorities of her aunt, and it were folly to rely on her help. With that done, she grabbed a pinch of floo and tossed it into the fire, "Rosier mansion!"

---(Scene Break)---

In the meantime, the two purebloods had confronted their own parents and demanded that they do something to help Harry Potter. A long argument had followed, but the wisdom of the adults was to wait and watch, ere they played their hands. The adults were, by nature, cautious and they didn't wish to show their hands prematurely. Both the Greengrasses and the Rosiers, while perhaps not in the class of Narcissa as politicians, were nevertheless, quite capable of judging the situation thoroughly. There were two reasons why the adults were more circumspect with regard to Harry. The first and less important reason was that they didn't know enough to act. All they knew was that Harry was gone missing and they were content to sit back and

watch for developments ere they committed themselves to any course of action. To rush blindly into any situation was not their way of doing things. The second and more important reason was that they were really unwilling to risk breaking the law to help Harry. It was one thing to discreetly help him, encourage him to rebel against Dumbledore and perhaps even hide him with little peril to their own families, but a very different kettle of fish to actually break the law and risk jail time to help Potter. It was, in their opinion, a most undesirable position to find themselves in.

The children were not, however, endowed with so much patience, nor with the political calculations of their parents. Their only intention was to see Harry free of the clutches of the Dursleys. Therefore, they protested loudly against the lines taken by their parents, and they wanted to see some results immediately. This was not to be, however, and Daphne and Sakarbal had been told to wait for a couple of days ere anything could be done.

Denied all aid by the adults, the two purebloods decided to strike out on their own. To that end, the next morning, they had a quick discussion with Millicent, Susan and Tony about the possibilities. Several plans were examined, and one of the more promising – as they viewed it – was adopted. Susan picked up a pinch of floo powder and called, “Granger residence!”

---(Scene Break)---

Sakarbal, Millicent, Susan, Daphne and Tony were assembled on the front lawn of the Grangers, where they were all consuming their morning tea. Susan had finished narrating Harry Potter's predicament, and besought, “You see, Dr. Granger, it's impossible for us to check on the Dursleys. No witch or wizard, except those permitted by Dumbledore, can go there. However, as far as we know, there's nothing to stop you from having a look there.”

“What makes you think I can get in?” asked Dr. Granger.

“Two reasons,” murmured Susan softly, in her quiet, grave voice. “First, plenty of salesmen have been visiting the Dursleys uninvited, from what Harry has told us. They were able to get past the wards

without any trouble, and they were muggles. Second reason: the complete isolation of the Dursleys from the muggle world would seriously inconvenience them. They would not be able to invite anyone they wished without the old man's nod. We don't believe that the Dursleys would permit Dumbledore that amount of control over their lives, nor would the old man wish to involve himself so much in the affairs of the muggles. We guess that you should be able to get in."

"You guess? You don't know?"

"We can't know. But considering that muggles have been visiting the Dursleys for many years, we think you should be able to get in."

"How can you be sure he's there?"

"He's not anywhere else that we can find. And if he were outside, there'd be no reason for him to avoid us. We're his best hope of getting away from the Dursleys. He'd have come to us if he were able to get away. So we suspect he's still inside the Dursley household."

"And if I get in, then what?"

"Try to talk to Harry. Find out what condition he's in. And once we know that, we should be able to find a way to get him out."

Dr. Granger considered the request for a couple of minutes. Finally, he could no longer resist the plea in the eyes of his daughter and her friends. He sighed, "Very well, I'll do my best to find out what exactly has become of your friend."

---(Scene Break)---

In the meantime, Harry Potter was closeted in his prison, bitterly considering how close to freedom he had been and how far he was now from it. It had already been more than four and twenty hours since he had been flung in his room and locked up, and already uncle Vernon had been as bad as his word. Except for short toilet breaks, Harry was effectively confined to his room. Some old soup was all he got to eat. His mirror and wand were locked up, Hedwig was a

prisoner in the same room as himself, and finally, his uncle had become an admirable gaoler, ensuring that Harry had no way to communicate with his friends. He was still musing when the door opened and his aunt appeared in the doorway with a small bowl of soup. Harry reflected bitterly that she was using the same bowl she had used to feed Ripper – aunt Marge's dog. He addressed his aunt, "You know, aunt Petunia, you're taking a chance, don't you?"

His aunt gave him a disdainful look, "What're you blathering about?"

"I have friends, aunt Petunia," Harry whispered. "You saw them at King's Cross. They'll come looking for me. What d'you think they'll do when they find me in this state?"

Petunia laughed shrilly, "They'll never be able to get in here. Your headmaster promised us that he'd make sure none of your freak kind would be able to get in here."

Harry decided to carry his bluff further. After all, he had precious little to lose now. "Dumbledore makes promises he can't keep. He won't care about you. And once my friends get here, they won't be pleased with you, will they?"

Petunia turned over two angers in her mind – the anger of Dumbledore if she let Harry go free, and that of Harry's allies if she did not. Dumbledore's anger and power predominated enormously. Consequently, she rewarded Harry's blackmail attempt with a resounding slap. "Don't you dare threaten us with your freak friends! You had better make sure that they don't come here. We've taken you in from the kindness of our hearts, when we should have sent you to the orphanage. And if they come, you had better make sure nothing happens to us. You still need to come here every year, from what your headmaster said!"

Harry chuckled, "Aunt Petunia, I am a celebrity in our world. Surely, Dumbledore told you that? What do you think the wizarding world will do to you when they find out how you've been treating me? Do you think Dumbledore will even try to save you?"

Aunt Petunia smiled back ruthlessly, "But, Harry, no one can come in here to check the veracity of your statements. Even if you tell them 'stories' about us mistreating you, who'll believe you? And the old man, to save himself, will strongly refute everyone of your statements. He'll help us because his own future is tied up with us. And he'll make sure that no one believes you."

"And what will happen to you once I come of age and become an adult? Then I'll be able to use magic wherever I please."

"Before you become an adult, we'll take steps to ensure that neither you, nor your friends will be able to harm us. You don't think we'd overlook that, did you?" sneered Petunia.

Harry was taken aback at how much of the wizarding world aunt Petunia knew. Before he could recover from his shock, aunt Petunia slapped him again. "Don't you dare try to spread falsehoods about how we mistreat you. Your freak kind is despicable and deserves much worse than what we're doing to you." With that, she left the room, leaving him with the watery soup. Harry reflected that Dumbledore had indeed found some very effective gaolers.

---(Scene Break)---

It was late in the evening when Dr. Granger returned to his home in Cambridgeshire. Hermione and her friends were still waiting for him, and as he alighted from his car, Hermione interjected, "Dad, what happened?"

The dentist sighed wearily, "I couldn't even find the house. There is a No. 3, Privet Drive, and a No. 5. I couldn't even find a No. 4."

Hermione and Goldstein exchanged a tight lipped glance, full of understanding. Goldstein nodded, "Thank you, Dr. Granger. You've done all you can, and we're grateful."

"Wait a second. Why could I not find No. 4?"

Hermione answered, "It's part of the wards, I'd imagine."

“How exactly does it work?”

“We're not sure either, dad. But we feared you wouldn't be able to find Harry.”

“You suspected I would be going on a wild goose chase and didn't tell me?” There was some heat in Dr. Granger's voice.

Daphne answered, “It was just possible you might have been able to get in past the wards. It was a chance we couldn't afford to ignore, and sending you to find Harry was worth a try. Now we'll have to find other means.”

Dr. Granger stared in wordless wonder at the coldly determined set of departing wizards and witches, his daughter accompanying them. He was not the first to wonder just how Harry Potter could inspire so much loyalty among his friends. Not for the first time did he wonder what would be the end of it all. It shook him, but it also comforted him for the first time. If his daughter had such staunch allies, then she was likely to prosper well in her new world. He fervently prayed it would be so at least.

---(Scene Break)---

Emmanuel Goldstein, Narcissa Malfoy, Berenice Rosier and Priscilla Greengrass listened in serious discomfort to the report by their children. Muggles could not find No. 4, Privet Drive, owls had returned without delivering their messages and were refusing to accept anymore to Harry Potter, and finally, Harry Potter had gone missing for more than six and thirty hours now. It all added up to a very dismal picture. The only silver lining in this otherwise dark cloud was that there were absolutely no reports of anything wrong happening to Harry Potter – a discreet check in St. Mungo's by Priscilla had yielded the information that Harry Potter had not been registered inside the hospital. Nor had any signs been discovered about him elsewhere, either by the Ministry or by Nott's own very capable information network. Finally, Berenice spoke, “It thus boils down to two possibilities. First, he never left the Dursleys' household. Second, he left it and something's happened to him afterwards.”

The others nodded in assent, and the slender witch continued, "There's nothing to indicate the latter. Had he been captured by Death Eaters or other criminal elements, we should have heard by now. Besides, Death Eaters are not particularly interested in Harry Potter these days. Some fanatics remain, but it is questionable what they would want with Harry. Had he been taken by simple criminal elements, there would be ransom attempts. There are none that we know of. The only thing I can think of is that he's been taken by people who want to research him, or use him for other purposes."

Narcissa broke in in her smooth voice, "Niki – had that happened, it should have happened in the utmost secrecy, else Andronicus would have known. Also, we've had Dumbledore watched. Had Harry been truly missing, the old man would've swung into action. Dumbledore is still having a carefree vacation in Spain. So, I think we can rule out the idea that Harry has been kidnapped or killed."

"So he's still inside Privet Drive?" queried Priscilla.

"Most likely," answered Narcissa.

"How then can we help him?"

At this, Emmanuel stirred, "Do we need to help him? He's with his guardians. If we help him escape, we could be charged with kidnapping, and aiding and abetting removing a child from his rightful guardians."

Narcissa spoke, her tones clipped and icy, "The boy is with those muggles who treat him worse than the worst of the Dark Lord's servants did their house elves. We promised him that we'd aid him find a better life."

"Very convenient promise, Cissy," murmured Emmanuel silkily. "But you're overlooking the consequences of helping Harry Potter."

Narcissa ignored the remarks and questioned, "What about Privet Drive? Supposing that he's there, can we do anything to help him?"

Emmanuel and Berenice exchanged a glance, before the latter replied, "Emmanuel and I spent a few hours today examining the wards, Cissy. Those wards are extraordinarily powerful. We really don't understand all of it yet."

"What did you find?"

"Although unsatisfactory, our researches have not been completely barren. First, Dumbledore told Harry that his mother's love for him had given him a strong protection. There are several wards based on love, but only one that is sufficiently powerful to match the one in Privet Drive. It is a very old spell called 'sanguine aegis'. If that is the ward being used, it will work as long as Petunia and Harry are alive. It uses their blood to create a very powerful shield around the house, and around Harry. Yet, there are a few things about that ward in Privet Drive that don't quite match with the 'sanguine aegis' ward."

"Okay. Does that mean that it is impossible for us to get in?"

"Without breaching the wards, it is impossible."

"And you dare not breach the wards?" queried Narcissa shrewdly.

None of the others answered, so Narcissa nodded in understanding. She requested, "Can't you even find a way to send a message to him?"

"There are very few ways past that ward, Cissy," replied Niki wearily. "In fact, it is because of the strength of the ward that I conjecture that post owls are not accepting messages to Harry Potter."

"Surely there are other creatures that could carry messages ...," began Priscilla, but Emmanuel cut her off, "It is a very powerful light based ward. I would guess that only a very powerful light creature would be able to bypass those wards."

---(Scene Break)---

Despairing of getting their own parents to speak, Sakarbal and Daphne had implored Narcissa to tell them what was happening. At

first, Narcissa hesitated. After all, if the parents thought fit to keep their children in the dark over this matter, was it for her, who had learnt the truth only second hand to tell them what her parents had withheld. But Narcissa was an excellent judge of character, and she knew that Harry's friends would try something on their own if she did not give them the information, decided to divulge what she had been told. They thanked her for the knowledge and went back to their own group. An impromptu meeting was arranged at the Greengrass home, and the two purebloods filled the others about the state of affairs. Millicent mused, "Only pure light creatures can get past that ward, eh?"

"That's what my mum thinks," affirmed Rosier.

"Well, what are the pure light creatures available to us?" inquired Millicent rhetorically.

Hermione returned instantly, "Phoenixes, unicorns, and griffons are the only ones available in Britain."

"Quite," smiled Millicent. "There are very few phoenixes around and only Dumbledore and the McKinnons have access to phoenixes. I don't see either of them loaning us one to carry a message to Harry Potter."

There were nods of agreement. Millicent continued, "Unicorns are a better bet, since we have access to several unicorns around. But they are not very practical."

"No," agreed Susan. "It's all but impossible to get a unicorn to Privet Drive, and even more difficult to get the unicorn to deliver the message to Harry. Besides, if as we suspect, Harry is under lock and key, there would be no way for the unicorn get past locked gates and doors."

Daphne assented, "Amateur domiciliary skills are not part of the unicorns' repertoire."

“That leaves us griffons. But the only griffons we have access to are on Hogwarts grounds. How can we get at them?” questioned Rosier hopelessly.

“Not quite, Sak,” returned Millicent with a smile. “What family represents the griffons?”

“The Potters! But the Potter estate has been vacant and is under the administration of”

“It doesn't matter, Sak,” cut in Millicent. “As long as there's a Potter alive, the alliance holds. Which means there will be a griffon devoted to the Potters on the Potter estate. We can try to persuade it to help us.”

For the first time that evening, there was some hope in the eyes of all the assembled, as Millicent outlined her plan. “We floo to Potter estate, and persuade the griffon there to take a message to Harry Potter.”

“Can we get the cooperation of the griffon?” queried Justin.

“We can try and there's no harm in trying.”

The group agreed to the suggestion and rose to their feet.

---(Scene Break)---

Late that night, as Harry sat hopelessly staring at the closed door, he heard the flapping of mighty wings outside his barred window. Startled, he turned and perceived a huge griffon, with a small note and a mirror clutched in its beak, hovering just outside his window. He jumped to his feet and took the proffered items from the creature, even as he poured some water into a dish and offered it to his nocturnal visitor. The note was a simple one – signed collectively, from his friends, it inquired about his health and his situation. The mirror was a duplicate of the one uncle Vernon had confiscated – it had been Rosier's and he had sent it to him so that they could communicate. Feeling his spirits rise for the first time in the last two

days and hope of escape brimming in his chest at last, Harry warmed the mirror and murmured, "Daphne Greengrass!"

---(Author's Notes)---

`Ten That Were Taken' is a bit of wordplay on Glen Cook's Black Company series. The `Ten That Were Taken' were the ten minions of the Dominator and the Lady, each of the Ten having their own specialities and abilities. Here, the Ten are the friends and allies of Harry Potter, each having his/her own speciality and chosen discipline. There is no omniscient character in my stories. They all have their strengths and weaknesses.

The thing that strikes me most in fanfics is how much Mme. Bones and other adults are willing to risk for Harry. It is incongruous, when one steps back to think about it. What have the adults to gain by befriending Harry to the extent of risking their lives and liberties for him? Very little. It is one thing to help Harry by risking little themselves, but a very different kettle of fish to put themselves in danger for the Boy-Who-Lived. I have put my interpretation of the theme in the story.

Finally, try to guess why Dr. Granger could not get in to help Harry. Explanations will be available soon.

CHP3